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AUTHOR Burroughs, Robert; Roe, Tammy; Hendricks-Lee, Martha
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ABSTRACT

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification offers experienced teachers opportunities via written portfolios to match their practice to NBPTS standards. In creating standards and requiring teachers to argue in writing that they have realized the standards in their teaching, NBPTS offers a national discourse. However, since teachers' working knowledge is local, contextualized, personal, and oral, teachers may find difficulties in entering such discourse. This study followed four experienced teachers who were in an NBPTS support group and applying for NBPTS certification. The program provided intellectual and practical support on a monthly basis, with support varying by certification area. Researchers followed participants as they prepared portfolios for NBPTS certification, collecting data via participant observation during support groups and certification area groups; field notes during working sessions with drafts of portfolio pieces; and two interviews with each participant. Interviews asked about background, teaching site, attitude toward the NBPTS standards and process, and problems or successes in preparing portfolios. Data analysis indicated that all four participants had difficulty with some parts of the process of NBPTS candidacy, particularly with representing their practice in writing. Problems occurred in the areas of writing apprehension, representing tacit knowledge, understanding sample logic, negotiating the standards, and providing evidence from teaching. Candidates who were most successful were able to assume the NBPTS discourse values. (Contains 35 references.) (SM)

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Robert Burroughs
College of Education
University of Cincinnati
Box 210002
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0002

Phone: 513-556-0196
Fax: 513-556-2483
Email: Robert.Burroughs@uc.edu

Tammy Roe
College of Education
University of Cincinnati
Box 210002
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0002

513-556-1547
513-556-2483
Tammy.Roe@uc.edu

Martha Hendricks-Lee
College of Education
University of Cincinnati
Box 210002
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0002

513-556-3611
513-556-2483
Martha.Hendricks@uc.edu

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Communities of Practice and Discourse Communities: Negotiating Boundaries in NBPTS Certification

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Abstract

Certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) offers experienced teachers opportunities through a written portfolio to "match" their practice to the Board's standards. In creating standards and requiring teachers to argue in writing that they have realized the standards in their teaching, NBPTS may offer a national discourse about teaching, and as such may form a "discourse community." However, since teachers' working knowledge is local, contextualized, personal and oral, teachers may find difficulties in entering such a discourse. Using interviews and qualitative analysis, this study of four teachers applying to NBPTS certification found that teachers have difficulty representing their knowledge about practice in writing. Those candidates who were most successful were able to assume the NBPTS discourse values, which may be at odds with teachers' "working knowledge."

Communities of Practice and Discourse Communities:

Negotiating Boundaries in NBPTS Certification

Dramatic efforts toward professionalization of teaching have been made in the last 15 years. Educational research has identified multiple kinds of knowledge (e.g., disciplinary, cultural, social) and skills (e.g., communicative, diagnostic) that teachers must possess in order to be effective in the classroom. The emerging image of the professional teacher is one who thinks systematically about her practice in the context of educational research and the experience of others, working creatively and collaboratively as a member of a learning community. As a member of a community of learners, the effective teacher uses practical knowledge and experience to help students to connect with formal disciplinary and performance knowledge (Shulman, 1986). While practical knowledge is essential to any profession (what we might call "craft knowledge), studies of "professions" have argued that they strive to control professional knowledge and "jurisdictional authority," partly through the framing and control of discourse pertaining to the profession (Abbott, 1988; Yinger, in press).

Performance assessments from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) offer experienced teachers opportunities through a written portfolio to "match" their practice to the standards of the Board. In creating standards and requiring teachers to argue in

writing that they have realized the standards in their teaching, NBPTS may offer just such a national discourse about teaching, and as such may form a professional "discourse community" (Swales, 1990). Yet, as members of local communities of practice, teachers' movement toward a professional discourse community may not be a natural, nor an easy process. While a community of learners or a community of practitioners provides a powerful image for teachers, this image can be at odds with achieving NBPTS certification, unless the differences between a local community and a professional discourse community are articulated. Our purpose in this paper, then, is to examine both images of teaching and use the areas of conflict to suggest an explanation for the difficulties four teachers encountered during their preparation for NBPTS certification.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Teachers are members of communities of practice, which revolve around "working knowledge" and "ecological intelligence" (Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993). Such working knowledge is (among other things) local, contextualized, personal, relational, and oral. A discourse community has both intellectual and social conventions that include the kinds of issues that are addressed, the lines of reasoning used to resolve those issues, and shared assumptions about the audiences's role, the writer's ethos, and the social purposes for communicating (Herrington, 1985). Because the NBPTS is primarily a community of written discourse, we rely on Beaufort's (1997) definition, which focuses specifically on the writing practices of a discourse community. Discourse communities are "social entit[ies] within which a set of distinctive

writing practices occur and beyond whose borders different writing practices occur" (Beaufort, 1997 p. 518). Discourse communities like NBPTS tend to rely upon knowledge that is decontextualized, written, formal, and composed for an imagined audience. Using a framework developed by Beaufort, we will argue that (1) NBPTS constitutes a discourse community and (2) such a discourse presents difficulties for many practitioners who view themselves as part of a local community of learners.

Communities of Learners

Rich descriptions of effective classroom teachers (c.f., Clandinin, 1989; Lampert, 1986; Yinger & Hendricks-Lee, 1993) portray teaching as a socially constructed activity dependent upon the physical, historical, and cultural environment. Within this model, practitioners do not apply objective, individual knowledge; rather, they function effectively in the community, becoming enculturated into that particular community's subjective point of view (Brown & Duguid, 1996). Knowledge can be considered conceptual tools whose "meaning is not invariant but a product of negotiation within the community" (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989 p. 33). This negotiation is not necessarily articulated verbally, but occurs in situ, and understandings of complex practices emerge. Within the community, members need not represent this knowledge to each other, so much of it remains implicit. This is particularly true for effective practitioners. Effective practice is evident in the continuance of an instructional activity, which usually does not call for intense analysis. More often, it is ineffective practice that requires articulation and explicit examination.

Yinger and Hendricks-Lee (1993) go so far as to argue that knowledge does not reside in

the minds of individuals, but is inherent in systems: cultural systems, physical and material systems, socio-historical systems, and personal systems. The knowledge within these systems becomes available as working knowledge in particular activities and events. Teaching, for them, is conversation, from the Latin root conversari meaning "to dwell with." Like spoken conversation, teaching is situational, improvisational, and emergent. Effective teaching engages the systems in which the students are members and facilitates appropriate conversations for the particular activity.[1] Learning, then, is connection, and in the classroom, the teacher and students form a community of learners engaged in systemic conversation.

Although each of the researchers cited in this section emphasize different aspects of knowledge and learning, all agree that it is the communal context that develops and frames the understanding and interpretation of learners and practitioners (Lave & Wenger, 1990), and it is the interaction among the participants that constitutes learning. We suggest that these contextual qualities of successful teaching can present difficulties for those preparing for NBPTS certification.

Discourse communities

NBPTS candidacy for certification involves producing a written portfolio of one's teaching, demanding a certain amount of writing ability. The concept of writing ability, however, has been reconceived by some researchers over the last two decades. Rather than conceiving of a general writing ability, researchers talk about situated writing knowledge (Berkenkotter, Huckin & Ackerman, 1988; Herrington, 1985; McCarthy, 1987). For example, consider the problem of college freshman English composition. In traditional freshman composition courses, students are

taught to write academic essays, generally concentrating on the most common features of academic prose: an argument with a thesis and evidentiary support. The problem is that an argument in sociology is much different than an argument in biology. This is a short-hand way of saying that different disciplines have different "ways of knowing" (Anderson et al., 1990; Bazerman & Russell, 1994; Faigley & Hansen, 1985; Langer, 1992). There is some evidence that even within disciplines, there are various ways of constructing arguments (Herrington, 1985). The resulting problem for a freshman writer becomes, as David Bartholomae characterizes it, one of "inventing the university" as students learn to speak not only academic English, but physics English, sociology English, or history English (Bartholomae, 1985).

To learn to write, then, is learning the specific knowledge and practices of a field and its characteristic discourse. The concept of a "discourse community" is one way of describing the norms and shared knowledge that influence "composing" practices in a discipline, or indeed any social group. The concept has its roots in both sociolinguistics (Hymes, 1974) and literary studies (Fish, 1980). Hymes (1974) used the term speech community to refer to speech practices that are specific to a given group of speakers; Fish used the term interpretive community to refer to textual values and practices specific to groups of readers. Bizzell (1982) and Swales (1990) applied the notion of group values and practices to the field of writing and composition, using the term discourse community. For example, Bizzell (1982) defined discourse community as an audience's shared expectations, "embodied in the discourse conventions, which are in turn conditioned by the community's work" (p. 219, quoted in Beaufort, 1997).

In an attempt to analyze the various components of knowledge that members of a

discourse community share, Beaufort (1997) idenitifes three critical features of communicative activities required to create a discourse community. First, she identifies the "modes of communication," including the interplay of oral and written language; second, she identifies the "overarching norms for texts with regard to genre features"; and third, the roles for writers and "specific tasks as defined by the communicative situation" (p. 489). She proposes three additional factors that interact with communicative activities to define discourse communities: (1) a set of "underlying values and goals for the community that influence all productions of text;" (2) certain "material conditions" like spatial relations among participants; and (3) "individual writers' histories, goals, and skills" (p. 489).

Beaufort's analysis allows us to see not only the complexity of composition knowledge that members of a community prosess, but also the importance of the interplay between individuals' values and skills and communities' values and norms for texts. Learning to write, in Beaufort's terms, becomes learning how to negotiate individual and community values as they are instantiated in particular texts. In the section that follows, we analyze the task of NBPTS candidacy from the perspective of Beaufort's (1997) features and factors of a discourse community, arguing that NBPTS candidacy constitutes a discourse community. We will pay particular attention to the values that NBPTS espouses, later contrasting those with the values of individual candidates.

NBPTS as a discourse community

Our analysis of NBPTS as a discourse community will begin with an explanation of the values and goals that underlie NBPTS. We then will analyze the material conditions and the roles

and tasks that certification presents, followed by our analysis of the norms for texts and the communicative activities involved in candidacy. The data collected for this study, which categorizes candidates' difficulties with the NBPTS portfolio process, constitutes Beaufort's (1997) final factor of writers' individual values, goals, and skills.

NBPTS community goals and values. As a discourse community, NBPTS bases its goals and values upon the standards that it has developed to measure "accomplished teaching." The Board has created five "core propositions" about teaching, out of which the standards for the individual certification areas are derived. Table 1 lists the core propositions.

--Insert Table 1 about here--

The first point we wish to make about NBPTS standards is that these propositions are broad statements about teaching, open to wide interpretation. For example, proposition 3, "Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning," can be interpreted in a number of ways. At the time of the study, NBPTS provided some, but rather limited elaboration of the core propositions. Although almost every teacher would agree with this proposition, there may be disagreement about how the proposition is instantiated in classroom practice. One teacher might see a series of worksheets as "managing and monitoring," while another might see student portfolios as a way to manage and monitor. In either case, the teacher (or reader) supplies the context in which to understand the proposition.[2] The proposition itself is highly decontextualized.

The second point is that the propositions are represented in written language. While this seems natural and obvious, it is worth noting that NBPTS is certifying teaching, an act or series of acts that can be characterized as a performance. As we will explain below, one of the

consequences of this is that candidates are certified based upon their language about their teaching, not their teaching "itself." As a result, the certification process can be characterized as based upon written and decontextualized language about teaching.

Each certification area has created a number of standards specific to that area. For example, the Early Adolescence/Generalist certificate contains 11 standards. Table 2 lists the standards for that certificate.

--Insert Table 2 here--

Here again we would note that the standards are written as decontextualized propositions about teaching. Unlike the core propositions, however, the certification area standards are elaborated in a 49-page booklet that accompanies the candidate's portfolio instructions. Most of the 11 standards are elaborated in 2 pages of text, though "Standard II: Knowledge of Subject Matter," is elaborated in 10 pages of text. While the elaboration provides more context in which to understand the standard and provides a more detailed interpretation of the core propositions, the elaborations still require candidates to interpret the standard within their own context. For example, "Standard III: Instructional Resources" (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1996a) provides the following elaboration under the sub-heading of "Developing a diverse resource base from which judicious selections are made:"

> The resourcefulness and creativity of these teachers lead them to locate and construct alternative materials and activities as necessary, which might include adapting materials for students with exceptional needs. They carefully judge a range of materials, for quality and suitability, choosing those most appropriate to their students' needs. Their goal is to

blend materials from several sources to serve their broad curricular objectives. (27)

Though candidates learn in this paragraph that NBPTS values variety in materials, the candidate is still left to contexualize in her own teaching what "carefully judg[ing]" might mean or which materials in which circumstances would be "suitable" and "appropriate." Our point is not that NBPTS language is vague, but rather that it requires a certain kind of decontextualized thinking about teaching.

Within each certification area candidates prepare a portfolio of responses to a number of written exercises, which NBPTS calls "entries," and respond in writing to an additional number of entries at an assessment center. In total, candidates respond in writing to 10 different entries, seeking to demonstrate that their teaching meets the standards identified with each entry. (At the time of this study, as NBPTS materials were evolving, candidates actually responded to 12 entries.) Generally, entries are of three different types: entries focused on student work through copies of artifacts; entries focused on videotapes of classroom teaching; and entries focused upon professional work outside the classroom. Though entries may focus upon different artifacts like student work, videotapes, or conference presentations, those artifacts are interpreted and contextualized in writing. Hence, like the standards upon which the assessment is based, candidates' practices are represented in writing.

As such, candidates must present a written description of their practice which is relatively decontextualized, in the sense that candidates must supply the context for assessors. Unlike daily classroom life, which is continuous and whole, NBPTS entries require candidates to focus upon a few salient features of their practice (e.g., whole-class discussion, literacy development of a

child, a science lesson) and contexualize those in writing. In addition, the writing is oriented toward an imagined and distant audience, rather than the known and immediate one in practice. Because NBPTS focuses upon a few salient features of teaching, the assessment necessarily employs a knowledge system that is based upon sample logic (Delandshere & Petrosky, 1998). For example, the middle childhood/generalist portfolio describes the entries based upon video clips as

> "entries [that] sample a teacher's classroom practice across different classes if the teacher teaches different classes and across different topics during the year. In addition these video clips are designed to sample different kinds of instruction and classroom interaction. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1996b p. 5, emphasis added)

In constructing an entry response, then, candidates must think of each entry focus (e.g., student artifact, video tape) as a representative sample of their teaching, arguing that this part of their teaching is indicative of the whole of their teaching.

Finally, the portfolio entries require candidates to present artifacts as evidence of their meeting the standards. Implied in the presentation of evidence is the rhetorical task of explaining and justifying the evidence. Like legal exhibits, artifacts are available to provide evidence for claims, but are rarely transparent nor self explanatory. The notorious videotape of Rodney King, an African American beaten by Los Angeles police, is a case in point. Though the videotape showing King repeatedly beaten was broadcast by national media and roundly condemned, police defense lawyers in the eventual state trial successfully convinced a jury that the police

"restraint" was necessary. What had seemed a self explanatory videotape showing police brutality became evidence of police procedure in another venue and within another argument.

In sum, the goals and values of the discourse of NBPTS require candidates to represent their practice in writing to meet the Board's standards. In this instance, written language presents teachers with a task that decontextualizes their teaching and requires them to represent it to an imagined and distant audience. Moreover, candidates must represent their practice within a particular system of knowing, the salient features of which are sampling logic and evidence-driven arguments.

Material conditions. Within discourse communities the material conditions of composing can be significant. For example, researchers have found that physical proximity among communicators affects writing practices (Gunnarrson, 1997). Again, NBPTS candidacy creates an arena in which oral communication is minimal and written communication is paramount. Moreover, candidates are often working in isolation, though NBPTS encourages collaborative thinking in the preparation (if not the authorship) of portfolios, emphasizing again the relatively "distant" nature of the imagined audience.

Roles and tasks. The roles that writers assume in relation to tasks varies also by discourse community. For example, Beaufort (1997) describes the role that novices assumed in the writing of business letters in the non-profit company she studied. A novice writer of business letters assumed the role of solicitor, using the letter as an opportunity to solicit an action or favor from the recipient. Experienced letter writers in Beaufort's (1997) study, however, used the letter as an opportunity for confirmation of oral agreements, assuming the role of partner. NBPTS candidates

are in the role of applicants, not unlike applicants to a club or a job. Such a role highlights unfamiliarity, as an applicant seeks to understand the rules of a club or the requirements of a job. The particular rules of NBPTS application require, in addition, tasks composed of largely discursive writing in forms which are themselves unfamiliar.

Norms for texts. Beaufort (1997) argues that discourse communities have norms for texts. Though "norms" is an inclusive category that might refer to the thinking (knowledge system) that underlines a text as well as the form a text takes, we are using the word to focus upon the format of the text. For example, in Beaufort's (1997) study, she found that texts like business letters and grant applications had certain forms that writers accessed, sometimes varying the forms depending upon the audience. NBPTS portfolios also have a distinctive form for the entries that candidates submit. The instructions for every entry follow the same format and instructions offer candidates an explicit outline for their written presentation (though candidates are free to use the outline or not). At the end of the instructions for each entry, a section entitled "How will my response to scored?" provides a number of guidelines by which candidates can monitor their submission.

Though candidates are given explicit instructions regarding the entries, almost none of those applying for certification have ever written a document of this form. NBPTS portfolios are not a readily recognizable genre like business letters or APA research reports. In addition, because NBPTS certification is a relatively recent phenomenon, norms for texts are still evolving. At the time of this study, NBPTS had yet to standardize the instructions format for portfolios, nor were instructions as explicit as they are currently. As a result, candidates in our

study faced the following task regarding the form of their written response: They were writing in an unfamiliar form, with format instructions that were less explicit than they currently are. In sum, though the discourse of NBPTS is seeking to establish norms for its texts, candidates generally have little experience in the formats that NBPTS uses.

Communicative Activity. Within some discourse communities, communicative activity is characterized by oral, as well as written, activity. In Beaufort's study (1997), for example, memos were infrequently used because face-to-face communication was highly valued. In NBPTS portfolios, oral activity is almost non-existent. The performance is almost entirely rendered in writing, even when videotapes and student artifacts are included within an entry. In those cases, videotapes and artifacts are contextualized and interpreted in writing.

METHODOLOGY

Given the discourse community, how do candidates perceive their task and what difficulties does the task present? Over the course of two months, we observed and interviewed four candidates, Beth, Joy, Cathy and Sally (all pseudonyms), participating in an NBPTS support group funded by a midwestern state department of education situated at a large midwestern university.

Context and process

The purpose of the university-agency program was to provide teachers with both intellectual and practical support. Practical support included advice on videotaping, the purchase of videotape, and reimbursement to school districts for one day of release time.

Intellectual support included such activities as group discussions of interpretation of standards, peer editing of portfolio exercises, and response to drafts by university faculty and agency staff.

Candidates met with others in the support program on a monthly basis from September to May with university faculty, a National Board certified teacher, and staff from a local county education agency. The first three meetings were orientation, followed by weeks in which candidates formed certification area groups.

Support varied by certification area. Beth and Cathy, the two middle childhood candidates, were part of a group of middle childhood candidates who met frequently as a group. From January to March, the group met about every two weeks, with each meeting devoted to sharing and critiquing of drafts of one particular portfolio entry. The first author was a member of the group, providing feedback and critiques of drafts. Sally and Joy, on the other hand, were not members of a comparable small group of early childhood candidates. Sally worked with a colleague at her school, attending some of the support sessions but not all. Joy, similarly worked with a colleague at a nearby school, and attended even fewer of the support sessions.

Case-Study Participants

The four teachers in this study were chosen to provide contrasts of certification area and teaching site. Two teachers, Sally and Joy, were seeking elementary certification; the other two, Beth and Cathy, were seeking middle childhood generalist certification. Two candidates taught in urban schools; two in suburban schools. All four teachers were very experienced teachers, ranging from 12 years of experience to 25. One teacher was African American, Joy; the other three were Caucasian. Although we originally hoped to contrast teaching sites within certification

areas, an initial informant dropped out of the study, so the resulting design contrasted urban early childhood/generalist candidates with suburban middle childhood/generalist candidates. Table 3 summarizes relevant characteristics of participants in the study.

--Insert Table 3 about here--

Teacher Profiles. Beth was a very experienced teacher, having taught for 20 years in suburban and urban Midwestern districts. Her college major was in elementary education, and she since had taken "just enough [graduate credit] to get my continuing [credit for certification]." An NEA member, she was active in the local state association and "all the professional [groups] connected with [those] associations."

At the time of the study Beth taught third grade at Oak Elementary, a suburban school enrolling about 850 students. The school was located in a mostly middle class neighborhood, with "a few people who are in the upper middle." Beth says she has noticed a demographic change in the last five years with upper middle class people moving out of the neighborhood and lower middle moving in. But "basically it has four of each grade level and so it's a nice middle class suburban school."

Joy was a very experienced teacher who had been teaching for more than 25 years, most of which had been in the current urban district in which she taught. Her undergraduate degree in elementary education was from the local state university, and she had done graduate work at a local private university and another nearby state university.

Joy taught kindergarten at Willow Elementary, a primary school for students enrolling in pre-kindergarten through third grade. The school was located on the edge of a factory zone,

within a low-income housing project. As Joy explained, "Most of the children are from the immediate seven block radius of the school." Joy was in her second year of teaching at Willow, which itself was in the second year of implementing an all-school reading program designed to ensure that all "graduating" third-graders could read on grade level. The district had instituted new "exit criteria" for students and the state had instituted a statewide proficiency test. As Joy said, "Because of the new proficiency standards, and this being the third grade [exit year], a lot of our children have problems."

Sally, a veteran of 19 years, describes herself as a vocal and influential teacher who throughout her career has assumed numerous teaching and administrative leadership positions in various settings within her district. At the time of the study, Sally was enrolled as a full-time doctoral student in the local state university. In addition, she taught full-time in a combination kindergarten-first-second grade classroom at Hale Elementary, a neighborhood school within a large urban district and she taught a math education course at a small Catholic college in the city.

Besides being a teacher of all sorts, Sally has taken leadership positions throughout her career. In addition to being a mentor for beginning teachers, Sally served as an assistant elementary school principal, co-chair of a district-wide language arts curriculum committee, consulting teacher, curriculum coordinator, and lead teacher for her school at the time of the study. The year prior to the study, Sally participated in a pilot mini-district program.

Sally claims her teaching philosophy is rooted in the Montessori tradition. During her graduate work, she had the opportunity to work with a prominent educator in the field of Montessori education. She cites this as being influential in her formation as a teacher. Working

in a large urban district after graduate work proved difficult for Sally because the practices and philosophy of the district did not reflect her own beliefs. For Sally, teaching is a process of collaborating with students: " I see my role as a collaborator rather than a guide, rather that a facilitator...I am an active collaborator with my children" (3/25/96).

Cathy is a sixth-grade teacher in an suburban intermediate school. She has degrees in elementary education and curriculum supervision. At the time of the study, Cathy served as a team leader and as the reading/language arts subject area leader. Part of her duties with these roles included choosing materials for the language arts department. Prior to her work at the intermediate school, Cathy taught for six years in a variety of settings in suburban and urban settings and in a variety of positions, including special education teaching positions. The majority of Cathy's teaching career has been spent in the middle or junior high setting.

Professionally, Cathy has been a participant, then facilitator, and finally a member of a focus group in the Language Arts Academy within her current district. Although first intended to teach language arts methods, the Academy became a place where teachers shared ideas with one another. Cathy particularly enjoyed that part of the experience because she sensed an appreciation for her practical knowledge as a teacher. In addition to her involvement with district-level language arts professional development, Cathy reports growing professionally from her experiences in graduate school.

Data Collection and Analysis

The first and second author each followed two candidates as they prepared portfolios for NBPTS certification. We collected data via participant observation attending support group

meetings from September to May. We sat in on certification area groups as candidates discussed NBPTS entry requirements and standards, taking fieldnotes. We made fieldnotes in working sessions with drafts of portfolio pieces, and the first author, as support project director, read and critiqued drafts for the middle childhood/generalist group of candidates. Based upon these observations we focused upon the difficulties that candidates seemed to be experiencing in composing portfolio entries. Since our observations revealed that candidates experienced a range of problems, we selected a range of candidates. We selected participants upon the basis of certification area and teaching site because we suspected that teaching context might influence how candidates interpreted NBPTS standards.

Interview data was also collected. Each researcher conducted two interviews with two candidates during March and April of their NBPTS candidacy year. Interviews were conducted in the candidate's classroom or over the telephone, depending upon the teacher's convenience. The first interview focused on teachers' background, teaching site, and attitudes toward the NBPTS standards and process. (See Appendix A for a detailed look at the protocol used in initial interviews.) The second interview was more open-ended, allowing teachers to identify difficulties or successes they experienced in preparing the portfolio. Interviews ranged in length from 30 to 45 minutes.

Analysis. All field notes–participant observations from whole group sessions, notes from certification area discussions, etc.–were considered twice. Initially, field notes provided data about context. All interviews were taped and transcribed. Interview transcripts were coded for difficulties candidates faced. Field notes were then reconsidered for additional information about

individual candidates. Once the categories of difficulty emerged, individual candidates were considered as cases, and profiles of each candidate were written. Understanding the candidates as cases allowed cross-case comparison of both content and process. According to Miles and Huberman (1984), cross-case analysis allow for greater generalizability and for greater explanatory power. We found this method particularly useful in instances when candidates identified the same difficulty, but some candidates were able to overcome the difficulty and others not. The data describing such instances were re-interrogated to discover the stategies and approaches candidates developed to overcome the difficulty.

RESULTS

In general, all four candidates participating in the study reported difficulty representing their practice in writing. Five categories of difficulty emerged: writing apprehension, representing tacit knowledge, understanding sample logic, negotiating the standards, and providing evidence from teaching.

Writing apprehension

Three of the four candidates reported difficulties in writing because of a general apprehension concerning writing. For example, Beth stated, "My writing...really worries me. I don't think it's clear enough, but it is, it's way too wordy," and "I don't feel I could write as clearly as I like."(date) Beth also worried about her grammar and whether her style was appropriate to the task. In one peer group meeting in which teachers read their writing to each other, discussion focused upon several grammatical concerns, including active and passive voice.

Beth reported feeling "kind of dumb" because she was unsure of active and passive voice. Similarly, Joy worried about her ability as a writer: "The writing is difficult for me because I know what I want to say, I just can't say it to make you understand what I want to say at the time. That's the complicated part" (3/15/96).

Like Beth, Sally expressed concern over her writing; however, Sally's concern focused not so much on her ability to write but the attention given to the details of her writing (issues of brevity, clarity, and editing). Sally comments: "[This task] made me choose my words very carefully. It made me go back and do all kinds of proofreading and editing." (3/25/96) What was at stake for Sally was making sure she relayed the desired message to her audience: "[I had to] try and refine the words and [it made me] realize that in a very short period of time [page limits] I can not afford to be superficial"(3/25/96). Embedded in Sally's concern about writing is a concern for the opinions and reviews of a distant and imagined audience to whom she must communicate her practice.

Tacit knowledge

All four candidates reported some version of difficulty with representing their tacit knowledge in writing. For example, Sally reported a common difficulty of representing one's tacit knowledge about teaching: "It's real hard for me to represent things because there is so much depth and so many dynamics going on [in the classroom]" (3/14/98). The difficulty of Sally's task becomes apparent in Yinger & Hendricks-Lee's (1993) characterizaton of learning as systemic interaction. The "many dynamics going on" would include cultural, socio-historical, physical, and personal systems of the students, as well as disciplinary systems (language arts, for

the excitement when [students are] writing in their journals" (3/25/96). Joy realized that she could try to describe that excitement, but she believed the assessors would not "get the full impact" without being in her classroom.

Another example of Joy's frustration surfaces in her discussion of preparing the entry in which she shares the literacy development of a single child in her classroom. The child she selected showed tremendous growth, but Joy expressed fear that assessors would not be able to see that growth, unless they came to the classroom to see for themselves:

> Yeah, it's a big development, but it's through some things that we've done and all of that. That is the difficult part for me to write because I need for them to see this child in action. And that wasn't a video part and I wish it was, because I'd like for them to see when she was the teacher in charge. And I'm trying to write what she says and how she does it, but she's the perfect model to me. I mean perfect, and they won't see that on the video. (3/15/96)

Joy is worried that video tape cannot reveal the child's emersion in literacy and her ability to engage her classmates in literacy activities. Throughout the preparation process, Joy consistently expressed the desire to have assessors visit her classroom; in other words, to dwell with her and her students in order to fully understand.

Negotiating the Standards

All four candidates seeking certification expressed tensions as they worked to represent the kind of language and practice they deemed the reviewers wanted to see in portfolio entries. As these candidates worked to enter the community of NBPTS, they struggled not only to write

the language, but also to write the language within certain guidelines.

As Beth was trying to "put [her practice] into words," she was also trying to show that her practice matched the standards.

> You're matching [narratives] up to the standards and you know, though, usually they do match up, it's just finding that exact place where they do match up and seeing how their wording is. (3/25/96)

Beth needed to "match" the narratives of her practice to the requisite standards. She felt like she was "trying to predict those [standards and practices] they [reviewers] would think most valuable" (3/25/96). As she worked to accomplish this, she reported that she was "resentful of all those specific requirements" (3/25/96).

Sally felt the same. She reported that in writing portfolio entries she wrote as if she was "jumping through a lot of hoops" (3/14/96). Sally manipulated the language of her practiced to "fit" what she felt NBPTS assessors expected. She stated: "[I felt like I was] trying to predict those [standards] they would think were most valuable. I had to jump through hoops thinking `How do I isolate and is that the right way of doing it?' " (3/25/96). Both Beth and Sally recognize that negotiation is a joint activity, difficult to achieve in isolation. Their need to predict what the assessors will value--to supply the missing components of the transaction--frustrated them.

Part of the difficulty for Joy was rooted in her perception of a "right way" represented in the standards. "You're thinking they want to see everything right" 3/15/96). The problem for Joy was that with a "right-way" attitude the test would miss important things about learning in her

classroom.

> But, it says: engaging in a science learning, so you're going to make sure it's [an experiment] that works. [Assessors] are not going to see the fun stuff, or hear the questions like when we were doing colors, and somebody put too many drops of one into, they didn't get red and yellow makes orange, and they didn't understand why. (3/25/96)

In this comment, Joy attests to the situational, improvisational, and emergent nature of learning, which she characterizes as "the fun stuff." Whether an experiment is performed accurately is less important to Joy than the responses of the students who have their own questions. However, because of the constraints of the portfolio, Joy feels compelled to force a teaching episode into the framework of a standard and to ignore the value she found in the learning experience. "[In] developing the portfolio...some of the standards may not apply, but we're doing a portfolio [so] we have to make them apply" (3/15/96).

Completing portfolio entries entails using the "right" words to reflect the "right" practice. Cathy's reactions reflected both Beth's and Sally's reactions: "It makes you wonder...hey, if I can talk the talk here, I'll get through this" (6/5/96). These candidates felt that writing portfolio entries was a game of putting the right words in the right place to describe the right practices reflected in the standards.

Accepting Sampling Logic

Candidates differed in their acceptance and understanding of the sample logic that underlies the NBPTS assessment. Beth and Cathy seemed to understand and accept the logic; Sally expressed reservations about it, while Joy seemed to reject it altogether.

Accepting sampling logic. Beth and Cathy showed little difficulty with the sampling logic of the assessment. For example, Beth was able to use the written articulation ("putting it into words") and the sampling logic of the assessment to her advantage, stimulating her to a metacognitive level--thinking about how to think about teaching. In particular, an entry focusing upon a particular child as a sample of her practice had stimulated her thinking about students in general. She talked about this in relation to a journal, or "reflective diary" that she had begun to keep:

> I have been keeping a journal, it's like 24 pages now, but the thing is as I'm doing it, I'm thinking, now is this a diary or a real reflective journal cause I do go back and I think where this worked and this didn't work. Like, the kids were picking books for this interest group thing that I do, and I had several books up there. And one of the kids just didn't like any of the books and so I went home that night and I thought and thought was it the way that I advertised these books to them or what was it about what I did that turned them off to doing it? And then it made me really stop and think of the child because he's a child who doesn't like to work with the group and I would have just glossed over it and said, no, you just have to do it this way but this has really made me more aware of each of the kids, how they feel about things. (3/20/96)

Writing and focusing upon the single child as a sample of her teaching became for Beth a way of "seeing" her teaching, which had been somewhat invisible (tacit) to her before. "[The portfolio] has brought things to where I can focus in on them and think why do I do this."

Doubting the sampling logic. Sally, however, had more reservations about the sampling

logic. First, Sally wondered if the writing process could even capture what she saw as the complexity of her classroom:

> Have someone, have anyone come into my classroom for a week. Have a team of observers...meet with me at the end of the day, ask me what I was teaching, what was the rationale behind it, tell me something about this child, any number of those things. None of that can be communicated in a ten-minute tape. If I do want to back it up and try to explain what's happening in the videotape, because of the page-number constraints, I can't do it. (3/25/96)

Sally's doubts are questioning the basic sampling logic of the assessment. She wants someone--"anyone"--to observe her teaching for a week, though that would also be a sample of her teaching, of course. Failing that, Sally requests a kind of "oral" exam, in which she and a panel of observers might discuss the videotape and "explain" what is happening. Yet, even in that wished-for discussion format, Sally seems to doubt that a 10-minute tape is capable of providing a meaningful sample of her teaching: "None of that can be communicated in a 10-minute tape." But Sally goes on to say that no matter what, the written format constraints are too rigid for her to represent her knowledge of teaching <u>in writing</u>: "because of the page-number constraints, I can't do it." Earlier in the interview Sally is even more explicit about linking the problem of sampling, and its attendant page limits, with the problem of written representations of teaching knowledge: "I think some situtations you have to be allowed to exceed the page limit, because it's real hard for me to represent things..." (3/14/96).

Not only did sampling present a problem in writing, but it also presented a problem in

selection. In the Early Childhood/Generalist portfolio, one entry required candidates to profile the literacy development of a single child. This case study would then provide a sample of the candidate's literacy instruction, as well as an example of the candidate's ability to reflect upon a child's literacy development. In an interview Sally explained, in detail, a situation with a child in her classroom who had been identified as schizophrenic and returned to the classroom after several years of home instuction, emphasizing the dynamic of this element in her classroom and its impact on instruction. Because the context of the instruction with this child was so complex, Sally decided to profile another child for this entry, saying, "How do I demonstrate/explain that dynamic?" (3/14/96). Given Sally's reservations about sampling as a representation of her teaching and her perceptions of the written task involved in the entry, such a rhetorical move makes sense, even though it meant sacrificing the opportunity to illustrate the complexity of her knowledge.

Rejecting the sampling logic. Like Sally, Joy had doubts about the sampling logic undergirding the portfolio. Unlike Sally, however, Joy didn't seem able to adjust her rhetoric to compensate for her doubts. To begin, Joy doubted that the various kinds of portfolio entries represented a valid sample of her teaching knowledge: "You know, I've taught twenty-five years, I kind of know the direction education is headed in the multi-age, and all of that. But, some of this [portfolio] would not give me a clue as to who is good, and who isn't" (3/25/96). Joy's doubts stemmed from her belief that the entries really didn't reflect what she did as a teacher. The exercises showed too small a slice of her teaching, and not the most important part, she believed:

> The organization of the portfolio doesn't make me look at my teaching, because what I'm

> doing doesn't really fit in this, because of the things that they ask. If they focused on my teaching, but when they tell me to focus in on a child, then my teaching is geared for that child. So, it's not really my teaching for the total. (3/25/96)

Joy ultimately expressed the idea that the test didn't "really reflect my teaching" (3/25/96).

Like Sally, Joy struggled with the entry focusing upon the literacy development of a single child. First, Joy claimed that the task wouldn't show how she taught the entire class of students she had: "When they tell me to focus in on a child, then my teaching is geared for that child. So, it's not really my teaching for the total" (3/25/96). Focusing on one child would not show how she dealt with different individuals. For example, there was Erica who needed "models" to imitate; or there was Marlon, who was almost autistic and responded best to listening to instructions on audio tapes. But focusing on these individuals didn't give an assessor the big picture of her teaching, she believed:

> You're going to see, oh, I know how to handle this child who's possibly autistic. Then, you're going to see here's a child who is a very capable learner, then you're going to see how I deal with her. That's how you're going to see. You're not going to see the average child. (3/25/96)

Unlike Sally, who seemed to find a rhetorical solution to the complexity of the problem by focusing upon a different child, Joy seemed to reject the task altogether, believing that the case study (sample) did not represent her classroom or her knowledge about teaching. What appears to be important to Joy in this instance is not the support she provides for the individual child, but her ability to provide individualized support for all the children in the classroom while

maintaining the instructional activity. To focus upon one child would be to miss the community of learners that constitutes her classroom and reduce her teaching to a series of dyadic interactions rather than an orchestration of multidimensional interactions that support all learners.

Role of Evidence and Artifacts

Our sample of candidates varied less in their understanding and acceptance of the role of evidence and artifacts in their written responses for the portfolio entries. Three of the four candidates--Beth, Cathy, and Sally--accepted the role of evidence in the process; only Joy seemed to reject it.

Accepting the role of evidence. Beth, Cathy, and Sally all accepted that evidence and student artifacts functioned as support for their claims that their teaching met the standards. For example, in talking about a portfolio entry that included a videtape, Beth understood that she needed to analyze the videotape, which consisted of vignettes of her "classroom community." She characterized the problem as one of "piecing the pieces together like a puzzle." She realized that presenting the vignettes was not enough, that she had to explain and interpret them as well, showing how they did or did not reflect the standards:

> Interviewer: And so for you the puzzle of the pieces was a vignette where you started with the vignette and began to what, explain them or...
>
> Beth: Basically, that's what I did because I went back to the standards and I looked at the vignettes that I had and I said do these standards and these vignettes go together. (3/20/96)

In regard to this entry, Beth later talked about having trouble with a standard (respect for diversity) and in determining and representing that this tape (evidence) reflects this standard (respect for diversity). Though she expressed some concern about the standard, she did not challenge it or the process of evidence; her difficulty was in providing evidence for the standard.

Similarly, Cathy realized that without evidence to bolster one's claims about practice, the validity of the process would be compromised: "It makes you wonder...you can sit and write all this glowing...these wonderful things about what you do, but then you have to <u>prove it</u>" (6/5/96, emphasis added). Moreover, Cathy's observation about "proving" suggests her tacit understanding of the task: candidates have to construct an argument in which artifacts are claimed as evidence of having achieved a certain NBPTS standard.

Sally's understanding of the role of evidence in the NBPTS portfolio seems also to have deepened her knowledge of assessment concerning her own students. In having to document her own practice, Sally reported learning more about assessing her students:

> I think there was a heavy emphasis [in the entries] on assessment and a lot of writing and I find my assessment, for the most part, has room for improvement. It made me realize that I need more growth in the area of performance assessment...I learned that <u>documentation is a vital, vital component of it</u>. (3/25/96), emphasis added)

<u>Rejecting the role of evidence</u>. Joy seemed to reject the role of evidence and artifacts within the portfolio entries. She believed that artifacts--like student work, documents, etc--were self explanatory. Joy felt that the explanation of artifacts and reference to evidence created a redundancy in the test.

> Joy: It...it's the redundancy and then the explanation of artifacts. To me artifacts are self explanatory. When I go into a museum and I pick up a piece, and I say, 'Oh, this represents the stone age. Well, I can tell because it's very jagged very blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. The explanations of the artifacts is very difficult, because I mean, if I show...You know, if I show you this, why do I have to explain that this was an emergent writing lesson... I should be able to say in my writing of it that we were doing an emergent writing lesson... But, then they want all these details on each artifact. Here's Erica, self-explanatory! She came into my room knowing the letters, but not understanding the writing concept. Today, here we are. You know? And she does this [holding a sample of Erica's writing] on her own. And you know they, like where are the artifacts? This is the artifacts! (3/25/96, Emphasis added)

Though Joy claims that the artifacts are self-explanatory, her example of the stone-age tool in a museum reveals a tacit understanding of the need to explain: the tool "represents" the stone age "because" it has a jagged shape, etc. She can infer that it is a tool, because of its jagged shape, and perhaps other characteristics ("blah, blah, blah"). Yet, immersed in her world of practice, Joy seems to have greater difficulty "seeing" the need to provide the interpretation of her own artifacts in the same way that "jagged" provides for the stone tool. Erica's work ought to be transparent, Joy believes, not needing explanation, especially to a visiting interviewer who is able to "see" the writing.

DISCUSSION

This study focused upon the difficulties that candidates pursuing NBPTS certification reported experiencing. Relying upon the concept of a "discourse community," we intepreted the teachers' difficulties with candidacy as difficulties with the certification discourse. Because NBPTS discourse relies upon decontextualized propositions about teaching written for distant audiences, we hypothesized that teachers, who work in local, situated learning communities, might have difficulty negotiating the Board's discourse.

Indeed, all four of our candidates did experience difficulties with some parts of the process of NBPTS candidacy. Some months later, the four candidates in our sample received the result of their assessment, and three of our four candidates were certified by NBPTS; only Joy was not. Clearly, then, the majority of our sample were able to "solve" the difficulties that NBPTS discourse presented. In the discussion that follows we propose dividing the difficulties candidates expereinced into three "levels." First-level difficulties focus upon the writer's skills and attitudes about oneself as a writer; second-level difficulities concern the content of one's writing; third-level difficulties engage the values of the discourse community. Using this division, we will draw upon Beaufort's (1997) metaphor of discourse community "borders" as an explanation for candidate success--or failure--with NBPTS certifcation.

The first level of difficulty is the writer's attitudes (usually fears) with the task of writing, either a general apprehension of writing or an unfamiliarity with the task of representing tacit knowledge about teaching in writing. All four candidates experienced one or both of these kinds of difficulties. Joy, the unsuccessful candidate, experienced both of these difficulties, which may begin to explain her lack of success with the process. Yet three of the four candidates were

successful in reaching certification, so this level of difficulty seems insufficient to explain either success or failure.

The second level of difficulty concerned the actual content of the writing, the teacher's language meant to describe one's practice as meeting the NBPTS standards. Here again, all four candidates struggled with the tensions inherent in "matching" the written representation of their practice to the Board's standards. Yet, although all four expressed difficulty, three of the four were successful in achieving certification, so this level again seems unable to explain the certification of some candidates and not others.

The third level of difficulty focuses upon the underlying values of the discourse; in this case the sampling logic and handling of evidence demonstrated in arguing that one's practice meets the Board's standards. Here again, Joy struggled with this level of difficulty, as she did all the other levels of difficulty, eventually rejecting both the sampling logic of the task and the role of evidence in the assessment. Although Sally expressed some doubts about this level, she was able to move beyond them to at least work within the constraints of sampling and evidence, if not embrace it. Both Beth and Cathy accepted the sampling logic and the role of evidence and did not report difficulties with this level. Table 4 summarizes the difficulties by candidate.

--Insert Table 4 about here--

Although Joy clearly had difficulty with the process at every level, those candidates who were successful in achieving certification were not stymied by the difficulties with what we are calling the third level of difficulties. We propose Beaufort's (1997) metaphor of discourse community borders as a possible explanation of Joy's eventual failure, as well as the other candidate's

eventual success.

As discourse communities instantiate a group's communicative patterns, they also create boundaries between groups, which Beaufort (1997) refers to as "border crossings" (p. 524). In the present case the values, material conditions, norms for texts and communicative activity sponsored by NBPTS create a discourse community that privileges written representations of teaching performance employing sampling logic and evidence in pursuit of decontexualized standards. Candidates, however, work in situated communities, where complex knowledge is shared and implicit and communicative activity is most likely to be oral, rather than written. Engaging in NBPTS candidacy requires an ability to move from one discourse community to another; it involves crossing borders using written articulation and explicit examination as the "passport."

For Beth and Cathy, the passage was fairly straightforward. Though they expressed difficulties with the first and second levels of difficulty they were able to successfully negotiate the standards because they accepted the deeper logic of the assessment. They took on the values of the NBPTS discourse and were able to cross the boundaries, articululating their practice with evidence and explicitly examining it through the sampling logic. Sally, on the other hand, can be said to have paused at the border. She too expressed difficulties with writing and the standards, but she also questioned the values of the community when she questioned the sampling logic upon which the articulation is based. Sally was eventually able to cross the border partly because she was able to draw upon past professional and academic writing experiences which prepared her to relay the content of her message while adhering to the form and function of the NBPTS

guidelines. At least for the time of her writing, she was able to take on the values of the NBPTS discourse, even as she harbored doubts.

Joy, however, was not able to cross the boundary. She experienced all the difficulties and self doubts of the other writers but also was unable to embrace the values of the discourse (at the very least during the time of the portfolio construction). It would appear that Joy was so situated within her own discourse of practice in which case samples were a hindrance and evidence was self explanatory that she was unable to assume the discourse of NBPTS. Beaufort (1997) notes that individuals' values, as well as skills, are negotiated in novices' learning of new discourses. In Joy's case, this difference in values regarding logic and evidence seemed crucial in her not passing from one community to another.

IMPLICATIONS

Professions create and maintain their status partly through discourses (Abbott, 1988; Yinger, in press). As argued in this paper, NBPTS standards can be seen as "discourses" that represent knowledge in particular ways. NBPTS claims "that the accomplished teacher has mastery of a codified professional knowledge base" (King, 1994, p. 99). Within NBPTS, the "professional knowledge base" of the teaching profession is "codified" in the form of the standards. These standards may be able to form and reform the profession by influencing how teachers think about teaching. Because professions, the teaching profession included, often encompass "competing" discourses and so create conflicts about what counts as professional knowledge, we question what happens when the "knowledge" of teachers as members of

contextually-based practicing communities collides with the "knowledge" of NBPTS standards. We believe a collision of "knowledges" may be occurring and this collision raises a number of issues.

First, the practical knowledge of teachers as members of communities of practice is local, contextualized, personal, relational and oral. The success of an effective practitioner, in this case a practitioner of teaching, lies in the realm of performance. On the other hand, the "knowledge" of the NBPTS community is decontextualized and is represented in written language rather than oral language. As candidates move from their knowledge of communities of practice to the knowledge of NBPTS discourse, they face the challenge of effectively representing performance of teaching in written language about teaching. Our admittedly small sample suggests these systems of knowledge may be at odds with one another. Delanshere and Petrosky (1998) raise a similar concern when they suggest that the key measurement assumptions, including sampling logic, underlying the NBPTS portfolio may not truly measure the performance of teaching. While our study highlights that concern, we are less troubled by the performance/language dichotomy than others (Ballou & Podgursky, 1998; Delandshere & Petrosky, 1998; King, 1994) might be, given the nature of other professional certifications. Lawyers, doctors, and architects all pursue certification through written language tests, even though those professions all have significant "performance" domains.

In our study we see the dueling values as two ways of thinking about teaching: teachers as members of communities of practitioners and teachers as members of NBPTS discourse community. We see in the case of Joy a value placed on oral communication and an assumption

about the role of and value of implicit, tacit knowledge. Bond's (1998) studies of NBPTS certification rates of African American teachers suggests that cultural differences may play a role in how some NBPTS portfolios are read by assessors. Irvine and Fraser (1998) have argued that African American teachers may use a "culturally specific pedagogical style" at odds with that valued by NBPTS discourse. An alternative interpretation is that these teachers have not fully created the context and/or explicated the logic underlying their practice; their educational aims for their students might include cultural, social, and economic issues that lie outside the constraints of the NBPTS entries. Research on "cultural markers" suggests that such alternate discourse styles may affect how NBPTS assessors score texts written by African American candidates (Bond, 1998). King (1994) has claimed the language of the Standards tends to "mask the fact that [they] will be created/invented to serve certain purposes that may not align with classroom teachers' purposes" (p. 101) and that the process "ultimately den[ies] the impact of specific local conditions" (p. 104). Further research like Bond's (1998) into discourse differences, whether generated by culture or context, are needed to explore this problem.

Finally, our study has implications concerning the goal of NBPTS certification. Some have argued that NBPTS has the potential to provide a vehicle to reform teaching (Delandshere & Petrosky, 1998; National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, 1996; Rotberg, Futrell, & Lieberman, 1998); NBPTS itself has asserted such a claim, though in more recent literature the Board has downplayed that goal of certification. Other professions (doctors, lawyers, architects) do not state reformation of their work as the goal of certification or licensing, though licensing may have that effect (Abbott, 1988). We believe that NBPTS may yet have a

reforming effect on the teaching profession by helping to refine the profession's discourse.

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Appendix A--Initial Interview Protocol

I. Background information

A. The candidate

1. Where are you teaching now?

2. Have you taught other places?

3. What is the school like where you are currently?

4. How long have you been teaching in all?

5. Have you always taught at this grade level?

6. What are your degrees? In what fields?

7. What professional activities (associations, etc) are you engaged in?

B. The project

1. Why did you apply for NBPTS certification?

2. What do you hope to get out of this?

II. Perception of constraints on teaching

To what extent do feel hindered in your teaching by:

1. Your school's curriculum

2. Your school's scheduling

3. Administrative support

4. Teaching materials

5. Collegial support

6. Other

Endnotes

1. Applebee (1996) suggests much the same approach to curriculum, proposing that curriculum be conceived as "domains for culturally significant conversations." Though Applebee does not highlight the improvisational nature of conversations, he does argue that successful teachers facilitate students' entries into traditions of disciplinary "ways of knowing" which are systemic in nature.

2. Since the study reported here, NBPTS has created greater elaborations of the core propositions. For example, current Board literature elaborates Proposition 3 in three pages of text, rather than two paragraphs. However, even in their current forms, the elaborated propositions still can only address the proposition in general statements, such as "[Accomplished teachers] can track what students are learning (or not learning), as well as what they, as teachers, are learning" (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1997 p. 14). Candidates must still use their own teaching context to both interpret what "track" might mean in the proposition and to represent their own practice as meeting the certification-area standards derived from the core proposition.